

Message Text

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ACTION AF-08

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07 L-03
NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 DHA-02
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FM AMCONSUL CAPE TOWN
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5539
INFO AMEMBASSY PRETORIA
AMCONSUL DURBAN
AMCONSUL JOHANNESBURG

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE CAPE TOWN 1284

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PINT, EGEN, ELAB, SF
SUBJ: CAPE TOWN CHAMBER OF COMMERCE ISSUES NON-DISCRIMINATION
MANIFESTO

SUMMARY. CAPE TOWN CHAMBER OF COMMERCE ANNOUNCED DECEMBER 8 THAT IT WOULD CALL ON ITS 1400 MEMBER FIRMS TO SIGN A MANIFESTO PLEDGING AN EMPLOYMENT POLICY OF "TOTAL AND GENUINE NON-DISCRIMINATION". IN ELEVEN DAYS SINCE MANIFESTO SENT TO MEMBER FIRMS, MORE THAN 200 HAVE SIGNED. LIST OF SIGNATORY FIRMS WILL BE PUBLISHED NEXT MONTH WHICH CHAMBER PRESIDENT SAYS PRIVATELY HE HOPES WILL "SHAME" OTHER FIRMS INTO SIGNING. WHILE EXPOUNDING WORTHY PRINCIPLES, HOWEVER, MANIFESTO APPEARS TO CONTAIN LITTLE THAT IS NEW OR LIKELY TO RESULT IN CHANGES ON SIGNIFICANT SCALE. END SUMMARY.

1. IN LETTER TO MEMBER FIRMS DATED DECEMBER 10, CHAMBER CITED GROWING DEMANDS FOR CHANGE IN SOUTH AFRICA AND ASSERTED THAT NOT ONLY GOVERNMENT BUT BUSINESS ALSO MUST DO EVERYTHING POSSIBLE TO EASE RACIAL TENSION. LETTER ASKS FIRMS TO SIGN FOUR POINT MANIFESTO WHEREBY "SUBJECT TO PROVISIONS OF THE LAW" (LATTER
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PHRASE IN CAPITAL LETTERS) FIRMS PLEDGE TO A. SELECT EMPLOY
TRAIN AND PROMOTE STAFF WITHOUT REGARD TO RACE OR COLOR B.
DETERMINE SALARIES AND WAGES IN ACCORDANCE WITH PRINCIPAL OF
EQUAL PAY FOR EQUAL WORK C. GRANT EMPLOYMENT BENEFITS FOR ALL
MEMBERS OF STAFF WITHOUT REGARD TO RACE OR COLOR, D. DO ALL THINGS
IN ITS POWER TO PROMOTE UNDERSTANDING AND HARMONIOUS RELATIONS

BETWEEN FIRM AND EMPLOYEES AND AMONG EMPLOYEES REGARDLESS OF RACE COLOR OR EMPLOYMENT STATUS. FIRMS ARE ASKED TO SIGN MANIFESTO AND POST PROMINENTLY IN THEIR PLACE OF BUSINESS. A MODERNISTIC LOGO SHOWING A BLACK AND A WHITE FIGURE CLASPING HANDS WITH CAPTION "OPPORTUNITY ON MERIT" WILL BE DISTRIBUTED TO ALL SIGNATORIES.

2. CHAMBER PRESIDENT STORM REILLY TOLD CONGEN OFF HE HOPED THAT SOME 500 MEMBER FIRMS WOULD EVENTUALLY SIGN AND THAT PUBLICATION OF NAMES OF SIGNATORY FIRMS NEXT MONTH WOULD "SHAME" OTHERS INTO SIGNING. CHAMBER DIRECTOR BRIAN MACLEOD, ON OTHER HAND, ACKNOWLEDGED IN SEPARATE CONVERSATION THAT MOST SIGNATORY FIRMS CLAIM THEY ARE ALREADY COMPLYING WITH MANIFESTO WITHIN PROVISIONS OF EXISTING LAW BUT STRESSED THE IMPORTANCE NOT ONLY OF THEIR COMPLYING BUT OF BEING SEEN TO COMPLY. HE ALSO SAID SIGNING BY EMPLOYER WOULD GIVE EMPLOYEES CHANCE TO COMPLAIN IF THEY FELT EMPLOYER NOT COMPLYING AND CHAMBER WOULD FOLLOW UP COMPLAINTS WITH FIRMS.

3. WITH REGARD TO IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PRINCIPLES, MACLEOD SAID POINTS A AND B WOULD NOT BE ADVERSELY AFFECTED BY JOB RESERVATION SINCE HE CLAIMED THAT "IN PRACTICE" IT WAS VIRTUALLY NON-EXISTENT IN CAPE PROVINCE, BEING CONFINED ALMOST ENTIRELY TO MINING INDUSTRY. WHILE IT EXISTED "ON PAPER" IN CLOTHING AND FURNITURE INDUSTRIES IT WAS IN FACT NOT BEING OBSERVED. AS FOR POINT C, EQUAL EMPLOYMENT BENEFITS, MACLEOD SAID THIS INCLUDED HEALTH AND PENSION SCHEMES AS WELL AS AMENITIES SUCH AS LUNCHROOMS, TOILETS, ETC. HE SAID THIS WOULD NOT PRECLUDE FIRMS FROM ESTABLISHING OR MAINTAINING SEPARATE AMENITIES FOR DIFFERENT LEVELS OF EMPLOYEES, E.G. EXECUTIVE DINING ROOM AND STAFF CANTEEN OR CAFETERIA, BUT LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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WHERE FACILITIES WERE PROVIDED FOR ANY LEVEL OF EMPLOYEES THEY SHOULD BE AVAILABLE TO ALL REGARDLESS OF RACE. BOTH MACLEOD AND REILLY ARGUED THAT THIS WAS NOT PROHIBITED BY LAW. SHOPS AND OFFICES ACT AND FACTORIES ACT, THEY SAID, BOTH CONTAIN PROVISION THAT WHERE A GOVERNMENT LABOR INSPECTOR FINDS THERE IS GOOD CAUSE TO ORDER SEPARATION OF EMPLOYEES BY RACE HE MAY DO SO BUT IN PRACTICE, SO LONG AS NO SERIOUS FRICTION IS GENERATED, SHARED FACILITIES MAY BE PROVIDED.

4. THERE HAS BEEN SOME CRITICISM OF CAPE CHAMBER FOR GOING ITS OWN WAY ON MATTER WHICH IS ESSENTIALLY OF NATIONAL CONCERN. BOTH REILLY AND MACLEOD RESPOND THAT EFFORT TO GET AGREEMENT THROUGH ASSOCIATION OF CHAMBERS WOULD HAVE RESULTED IN PROBABLE DILUTION OF CONTENT AND CONSIDERABLE DELAY. THEY PREFERRED TO TAKE ACTION NOW AND LET REMAINDER OF CHAMBERS USE THEIR ACTION AS EXAMPLE AND EXCUSE FOR TAKING SIMILAR ACTION.

5. COMMENT- IDEA FOR MANIFESTO APPARENTLY CAME FROM CAPE TIMES

EDITORIAL ON OCTOBER 29 WHICH COMMENDED PROPOSAL OF BUSINESSMAN RAYMOND ACKERMAN THAT LARGE COMPANIES COULD HELP REDUCE TENSIONS BY NON-DISCRIMINATION ON HIRING AND WAGES. WHILE IT WOULD BE TOO CYNICAL TO DISMISS IT MERELY AS A PUBLIC RELATIONS EXERCISE (IT WILL, AT LEAST, COMMIT FIRMS TO PRINCIPLE OF EQUAL TREATMENT AND PROVIDE SOME BENCHMARK AGAINST WHICH PERFORMANCE OF BOTH SIGNATORIES AND NON-SIGNATORIES CAN BE JUDGED) IT IS UNLIKELY TO RESULT IN CHANGES OF EMPLOYMENT PRACTICES ON A SIGNIFICANT SCALE. CHAMBER OFFICIALS READILY CONCEDE FOR EXAMPLE, THAT EQUAL PAY FOR EQUAL WORK IS MEANINGLESS UNLESS QUALIFIED NON-WHITES CAN BE FOUND TO OCCUPY HIGHER POSITIONS WHICH IN TURN DEPENDS IN LARGE PART UPON ADEQUACY OF EDUCATIONAL AND TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES FOR NON-WHITES. WHILE ISSUANCE OF MANIFESTO MAY BE STEP IN RIGHT DIRECTION IT IS AT BEST A VERY SMALL STEP AND SERVES ONLY TO UNDERLINE EXTENT TO WHICH FUNDAMENTAL GOVERNMENT POLICIES MUST CHANGE IF THERE IS TO BE ANY HOPE FOR REAL PROGRESS.

WHITE

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